



Montana Department of  
**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

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Ravalli County Commissioners

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Env. Health

Brian Schweitzer, Governor

P.O. Box 200901 • Helena, MT 59620-0901 • (406) 444-2544 • [www.deq.mt.gov](http://www.deq.mt.gov)

5 February 2007

Dear Montana Water Quality Stakeholder,

You are receiving this letter because you are a person or organization who might be able to provide data or information that would help the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) update its listing of Montana waters in need of water quality restoration.

Both state and federal law require DEQ to maintain and regularly update Montana's "303(d) List" of "threatened and impaired waters." DEQ is beginning work on its 2008 update. DEQ monitoring teams collected data last field season and will do the same this summer to update our water quality assessments of a number of waterbodies. However, the resources we have available for monitoring work are limited, and we know that many other organizations, both within and outside of state government, collect water quality data, which could be very useful in updating the list. That is why we are sending this request for any available recent water quality information to you.

**What kind of information is needed? Generally, our staff could use physical, chemical, and biological data relating to the current condition of streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs in the state.** Information relating to the use and condition of riparian areas may also be relevant. Specifically, Montana law requires DEQ to base its water quality assessments on data, which is "sufficient and credible" to allow for a determination of whether state water quality standards are being met or not. You can obtain a detailed view of the assessment methodology used by DEQ to comply with this legislative mandate by reviewing DEQ's Standard Operating Procedure for Water Quality Assessment Process and Methods, available on the Internet at:  
<http://www.deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/QAProgram/SOP%20WQPBWQM-001.pdf>.

**What information is unlikely to be useful in the assessment updates?** During the last several years we have received considerable information from many sources. We believe that our coverage is reasonably good for data collected before 2004. For this reason and because older data may not reflect current waterbody condition, data more than two or three years old are apt to be of less value. However, if they specifically reveal natural conditions existing before recent degradation events, then they would be of value. Expressions of opinion about the condition of water; data collected with out related process or procedure documentation, or metadata; or assessments not specifically relating to water quality impairment are also of limited value unless they are accompanied by specific information explaining the basis for the opinion or assessment. Finally, DEQ generally will not be able to use those types of raw field data, which require extensive or costly processing to make them useable for water quality assessment.

**How to get information to the Water Quality Planning Bureau?** We try to accept information in whatever form is most convenient for the provider. Hard-copy material or electronic files compiled on an IBM compatible CD may be sent via US Mail or state deadhead to the "305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report Coordinator, Data Management Section, DEQ." Please include information regarding the origin of the data. You can email your comments or compact data to [sstolp@mt.gov](mailto:sstolp@mt.gov). We also would appreciate being told of any sources of information which you believe could assist us and that we might not have identified.

Please be aware that the **deadline for submittal** of water quality data and other materials has been set for **June 22, 2007**. All materials received on or before June 22, 2007 will be reviewed in developing the 2008 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Water Quality Report. DEQ may not use materials submitted after that date in the 2008 Report, but DEQ will assess these materials for subsequent list updates.

Please address any questions to Staci Stolp, 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report Coordinator, at [sstolp@mt.gov](mailto:sstolp@mt.gov), or phone (406) 444-3409. Any relevant data that you can supply will be appreciated.

Sincerely,



Michael Pipp  
Data Management Section Supervisor  
Water Quality Planning Bureau  
P.O. Box 200901  
1520 East Sixth Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620-0901

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